

ENTITLEMENTS ANALYSIS RELATING CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS

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Abstract

Sen's entitlements approach has attracted much attention and imitation, including attempted extensions beyond its original context in the explanation of famines. It has evolved in various ways as it is applied to new regions, purposes, and subjects -- beyond South Asia, to policy design, and to matters of routine hunger, environment, gender and overall intra-societal distribution. For analysis of famines, the approach provides a valuable set of concepts and questions in explanation and policy design; but it gives a general frame rather than a comprehensive theory or detailed explanatory model. For wider subjects, this general approach -- a socially disaggregated, institutionally aware, analysis of effective command over specific necessities -- is again valuable. However difficulties may arise with its concept of 'entitlement relations', and with confusions related to the label and the referent of the 'entitlement' concept, and to the original 'exchange entitlement' label. Sen's concepts and labels reflected, naturally enough, the purposes in his study of the 1940s Bengal famine and its specific conditions. A modified set of concepts and labels may be more helpful, together with an underlining of the variety of contexts and of the limits to any one theoretical frame.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amartya Sen tackles big questions, matters of great theoretical and normative significance, such as the meaning of well-being and the causes of famines. His special quality is to combine strength in explanatory analysis, a feel for practical importance, and pioneering systematic attention to normative analysis, where he has provided both a critique and an attempted rebuilding of welfare theory. He handles his big issues, whether positive or normative, with a combination of lucidity and rigour; and thus he attracts interest far beyond fellow economists.

Sen's 'Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation' (1981) has stimulated particular interest, including diffusion and criticisms of his concepts and emphases, testing of the approach on other cases of famine, its extension into identification and assessment of possible famine- and hunger-relief policies, and attempts to apply it to matters other than famine and hunger. The body of work that takes 'Poverty and Famines' as a major starting point--whether for criticism, application, qualification, or extension--has thus become quite diverse. The danger arises of talking at cross-purposes, especially if differences in purpose are covered by ambiguous terms. I will try to distinguish various foci in entitlements analysis, and to consider how they relate to each other and to other types of work.

We must begin, in Section 2, with specifying what entitlements theory has contributed in famine analysis, and what it leaves unanswered, often deliberately. By considering de Waal and Osmani's exchange over the value of Sen's approach for explanation of famines, especially in Africa (Osmani, 1991; de Waal, 1991), and the nature of the WIDER programme of hunger policy analysis (Sen, 1987a; Dreze & Sen, 1989), we can start to identify various modes and substantive contexts of theorizing. Section 3 then reviews recent efforts to extend entitlement analysis's concepts and fields of application. Notable examples concern: general analyses of systems of distribution; present hopes for methods of 'entitlements impact assessment'; and studies of environmental problems and gender issues in entitlements terms. Identifying the wide range of current types of entitlements analysis makes one ask how far a single usage or approach can be adequate for all. Yet all of them use, and have been attracted by, entitlements terminology. Examination of a selection suggests that the references to 'entitlements' sometimes add little and can become confusing.

Section 4 reviews Sen's terms and their evolution, starting from Gore's argument that Sen has moved between different meanings of 'entitlement relations'. I suggest that more problems stem from the terms 'entitlements' and especially 'exchange entitlements', and from Sen's conceptualization of the latter. A growing penumbra of interpretations and misinterpretations can be traced to these aspects. The section ends with some cautions and suggestions on clarifying terms. Section 5 sums up the main arguments.

2. ENTITLEMENTS ANALYSIS AND FAMINES

2.1. The contribution of 'Poverty and Famines'

Sen began 'Poverty and Famines' with a formal conceptualization of poverty, and two fundamental propositions. (1): Reacting against the emphasis put on the social relativity of poverty by much postwar theorizing in the North, Sen emphasized that there is indeed absolute poverty--seen at its starkest in famines. (2): However we certainly need a socially disaggregated view of poverty, and must distinguish different groups in terms of their degree of poverty and the security of their access to basic necessities.

Sen's analysis of famines applied this disaggregated approach to absolute poverty. The approach was first presented in the mid-70s (Sen, 1976), perhaps provoked by the three 1972-74 famines--in Ethiopia, the Sahel, and Bangladesh--which he later analysed (1981: Chs. 7 to 9). But his original concern clearly derives from 'The Great Bengal Famine' of 1943-44 which led to the deaths of possibly around three million people. He lived through it as a boy in Bengal (Sen, 1990).

A generation later, Sen argued that the aggregate availability per capita of foodgrains in Bengal during 1943, the main year of famine deaths, was only 10% lower than the average for 1938-42 (1981:61). (Availability was even higher than that average in 1944, but by then epidemics were rampant.) Instead, groups without direct or assured access to food were hit by soaring rice prices, which were induced by inflationary wartime expenditures, food procurement schemes for people more directly involved in the war, and speculative hoarding. On top of government procurement, war-related restrictions on trading greatly limited effective availability in many localities (Basu, 1986). While 'the majority of the population of Bengal experienced little [or no] hardship over the famine period' (Sen, 1990:49; my addition), some vulnerable groups, such as landless labourers, rural artisans and fisherpeople, lost sufficient market command over food and lacked adequate alternative access (Sen, 1981, Ch.6).

Sen proffered two major, related, conclusions for the Bengal case. (3): The standard Food-Availability-Demand (FAD) explanation of famines was clearly insufficient, and could be devastatingly misleading. (4): Most people died because they lacked definite socially sanctioned claims, effective legitimate *command*, over food that was *available*. Sen called a person's effective legitimate command his/her 'entitlement'.

He presented the failure of entitlements to cover subsistence needs as the key cause of starvation and death in famines.ⁱ

'Poverty and Famines' elaborated these conclusions, with studies along similar lines of the three 1972-4 famines we mentioned earlier. I will not enter the disputes over the details of Sen's case-analyses or their precise relevance to other cases, such as the 1959-61 Chinese famine. I accept the consensus in recent literature, that the book at the least makes a major contribution to understanding of famines, and especially the Bengal famine. Of concern here is how far Sen's concepts and emphases reflect his original focus, and whether they need adaptation when we consider different cases and concerns.

We can posit a number of features of the Bengal case which helped to simplify the

conceptualization necessary for famine analysis:- a single overwhelmingly dominant staple food (rice); a highly differentiated society, including groups who were dependent on wage labour or supply of specific services, lacked substantial convertible assets, and were weakly protected by local rights and obligations for subsistence; in addition, the absence of an official social security system, and relatively little local charity; thus giving overall an example of, in Sen's terms, the dangerous phase or conjuncture when groups without secure access to food have emerged, pre-existing local support mechanisms have declined, and national social security arrangements have not yet appeared; plus, finally: an 'iron frame' of colonial administration in a war-time setting, which allowed marginal rural groups little opportunity for voice or resistance.ⁱⁱ

Sen used a set of novel concepts and terms in his analysis. First, a person's (or household's) set ('bundle') of resources, including their own labour power; this is called the person's (or household's) '*endowment*' (Sen, 1981:45) or '*endowments*'. Second, one's '*exchange entitlement*' (1981:3), or, in later and general usage, simply '*entitlement(s)*' (e.g. Sen, 1990b); namely, the set of commodity bundles that could legally be attained by using one's endowments and opportunities; in other words, a set of alternative possibilities facing the person/household. Third, the 'E-mapping' (exchange entitlement mapping): the relation that specifies the set of possible commodity bundles that are legally attainable from any given endowment, through 1. trade and/or 2. production (1981:3). The E-mapping thus reflects the rules, conditions, and processes which affect how one's entitlements are derived from one's endowments.ⁱⁱⁱ

Sen promptly elaborated the definition of entitlements to include 3. official social security (1981:6) and net taxation (1984:454-5); and we similarly need to add 4. the use of public goods, and 5. the effects of other social rights and obligations (cf. 1981:154-5). These last two sets of effects are sometimes referred to as leading us to a concept of '*extended entitlements*' (Dreze & Sen, 1989:10), i.e. extending beyond legal rights and obligations. The various extensions correspondingly extend the definitions of endowments and the E-mapping too, to cover the associated rules and arrangements.^{iv}

FIGURE 1 - SEN'S TERMS AND THEIR REFERENTS

(NB: read column by column)

SEN'S TERMS

Entitlement process as a whole (Dreze & Sen, 1989:89)

Entitlement relations: e.g.- trade-based et. prodn.-based et. own-labour et. inheritance & transfer et.	Endowments	(Rest of determinants of) E-mapping	Exchange entits. /entitlements - # Entit. failures: -direct failures -trade failures Extended entitlement - *
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REFERENTS

Rules of entitlement from trade/ prodn./labour /inheritance /transfer; including:- - Civil rights & obligations - Non-legal rights and obligations (+) - another formulation is to include within endowments a measure of effective access to public goods	Labour power Skills Information Land Produced means of prodn. Location & taxation schedules	Production- & trade-conditions Availability of public goods(+) Social security	# - Legitimate potential command - via own prodn. - via trade (- from transfers to & from govt.) * - Potential command via non-legal as well as legal rights & obligns.
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Influencing endowments, and partly overlapping with the E-mapping, are '*relations of entitlement*' (Sen, 1981:1-2), and the related '*sources of entitlement*'. These concern the types of possession/acquisition/ claim that are deemed legitimate in a given case. So corresponding to these relations are '*rules of entitlement*', namely the rules concerning each of the types and sources of entitlement: legal rights concerning private ownership of goods and factors of production, and concerning exchange, claims against the state and access to public goods, and other social rights and obligations.

Figure 1 relates the terms to their referents. This conceptual apparatus -- viz.: endowments; a mapping via production, trade, etc.; and a set of possible acquisitions,

whose use is rather unproblematic -- is a generalization of models in micro-economics, including in 'consumer theory'. 'Entitlement' is an extension of the concept of purchasing power, to cover acquisition potential as a whole, not only via exchange. We will return to the concepts and terms in Section 4, considering possible reasons for their choice, and associated weaknesses.

Leading on from these concepts are two types of '*entitlement failure*' (Sen, 1981:50-1): (a) 'direct entitlement failure', a fall of food command below subsistence needs because of a fall in the food produced for own consumption; and (b) 'trade entitlement failure', a fall of food command below subsistence needs due to worse terms of trade between the commodities one sells (e.g. labour) and the food that one needs to buy, or due to reduced supply of the saleable commodity.

People in Bengal seem to have died quietly, largely as a result of trade entitlement failures, a side-effect of wartime mobilization and legitimate market activity. '...the authorities in British India did not see their way to initiating any large-scale public relief for nearly six months after the famine had begun' (1990:49), and declined even then to declare an official famine. How, without any breakdown of order, could some groups be so marginal? And how could governments and officials remain insulated from the reality? Sen underlined the arguments we saw earlier [(4) and (3)]: the marginal groups lacked socially enforceable claims, and a remote government could complacently cite the apparently reassuring aggregate availability figures.

Analysis of different cases or issues might lead to somewhat different categories and foci. Sen himself said he was offering 'a general framework for analyzing famines rather than one particular hypothesis about their causation', meaning that he did not offer only one view of why people's entitlements may decline (1981:162), let alone a master-explanation that generates all the particular causes. In addition he recognised various factors that are not highlighted in his approach, like illegal transfers that violate poor people's rights, failures to make use of one's entitlements because of ignorance, fixed food habits or apathy, and unwillingness to sell productive assets (1981: 49-50, 164). Correspondingly he did make the *broad* hypothesis that these factors are *not* usually the main ones in famine, and therefore that we should instead emphasize study of entitlements.

Given the assumption that people make good use of their opportunities, the entitlements concept comes to refer *not* to the whole set of possible commodity attainments, but instead to its frontier cases, the *best* cases. Subsequent critiques have suggested that, before the starvation phases of a famine, people are significantly constrained -- by culture, habit, skill, and preference -- from using many of their opportunities; and on the other hand, adversity can promote new coping strategies, in the space left by 'under'-performance. Even during real but 'moderate' starvation, people may not use all of their food entitlements, but instead balance their own increased risk (due to malnutrition) of morbidity and mortality, against their wish and need to maintain assets such as livestock (see e.g. Woldemeskel, 1990). One can however view this as a chosen balancing of returns over time, rather than as failure to use opportunities.^v Such cases lead us on to examples of famine less catastrophically intense than in 1943-4 Bengal.

The importance of the arguments we have highlighted [(1) & (2), and (3) & (4)],

backed by Sen's incisive case studies, justify 'Poverty and Famines' high repute. In Watts' terms (1991:16-17), its contribution was to underline the centrality of power and of enforceable rights. Most of Sen's arguments were not new, but their marshalling, manner and timing attracted attention. In a world of unprecedented food stocks and televised famines, the cool, precise, and lucid argumentation of a distinguished economist could have an impact in universities and donor agencies. The entitlement concept itself --legitimate command over goods-- is simple but powerful, and gives a reassuringly scientific label in discussing disturbing themes.

The need to dethrone the FAD thesis remains vital in some countries. In Zimbabwe in the middle and late 1980s, government ministers declared that in a (then) food-surplus country there was little excuse for any family in which members were malnourished: their position could only reflect ignorance of what foods to buy and eat. Ministers delivered these 'common-sense' observations at the peak of post-independence pride, when the Zimbabwe government was receiving prizes for the phase of rapid --but highly unequally distributed-- expansion of peasant output. At the same time a large proportion of the rural population remained well below the official poverty lines, and in severe danger in bad harvest years, such as arrived in the early 1990s.^{vi}

2.2. *Famine theory beyond entitlements: Osmani and de Waal*

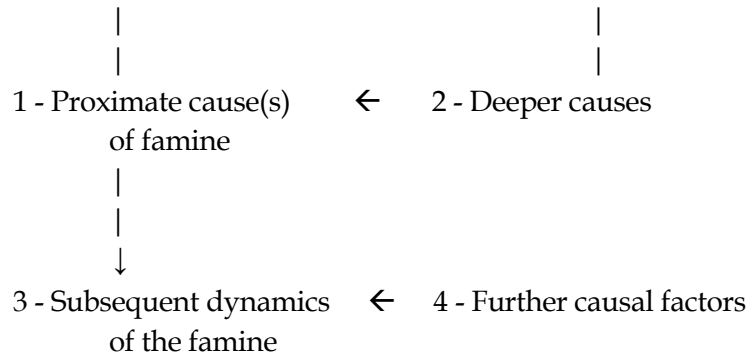
Writing from a close involvement with 1980s famines in Sudan and Ethiopia, de Waal (1990) shows the importance of the gaps that Sen had acknowledged in entitlements theory, especially if we wish to *explain* recent famines in *Africa*. He indicates other gaps or biases too.

Amongst de Waal's criticisms are these. (a) Sen focused on the extreme case of famine that involves virulent starvation causing widespread death (indeed this is how he defined famine; Sen, 1981:40); whereas we see a spectrum of cases, with no clear dividing lines. (b) Sen presented famine victims as primarily passive--as they may have been in Bengal, but were not in the recent African cases. Partly related to this, (c): Sen gave little attention (quite consciously - 1981:50) to the processes of change during a famine; notably, most people die of diseases which have their own processes, rather than from sheer starvation. (d) He neglected too the often fundamental roles of violence and associated social disruption in initiating and deepening famines. (e) He focused centrally on the case of the assetless wage labourer, so prominent in Bengal but relatively rare in Africa; and similarly, (f) he focused on the economic criterion of access to food, without much reference to other aspects of well-being--again because his paradigm case is of virulent starvation, as in Bengal.^{vii}

Osmani (1991) defends Sen. He admits with respect to violence and the associated disruption that entitlement theory (de Waal's label, which Osmani condenses to ET) does not examine all the specific causes of entitlement failures, and further that famine dynamics involve many other factors (points b, c, and d above). He argues though that all famines still involve at some stage a failure of food entitlements (p.591). Sen appears to say the same: 'in the case of famines the collapse of food entitlements is the initiating failure in which epidemics themselves originate' (Dreze & Sen, 1989:66). In Osmani's

terms, ET identifies failure of food entitlements as the *proximate* cause of famines. ET does not itself indicate the deeper causes or the subsequent dynamics of famine, though it helps to direct our attention in particular ways, to look for changes in endowments and entitlement mappings. Osmani thus distinguishes four foci for analysis, which I specify as 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Fig.2. ET provides the framework, including a hypothesis of proximate causation.^{viii}

Fig.2. [0 - Concepts used, including concepts on nature of famine]



We could of course extend the analysis of deeper causes. Entitlement failure caused by wartime inflation and speculation must also be seen as due to the forces which drove or kept many rural incomes down to such marginal, vulnerable levels and sources. We should not highlight only the last push, over the precipice. Patnaik (1991) shows this very effectively for the Great Bengal Famine. We must be careful then of privileging one cause over another, and of talking for example of 'trade entitlement failure' or 'direct entitlement failure'. (We see later how those terms have evolved into something different.)

De Waal's response to Osmani makes other criticisms. He queries Osmani's claim that all famines involve a failure of food entitlements. Consider the role of violence; RENAMO bandits reduce peasants' command over food, but seizing food does not reduce peasants' legal entitlements. In addition, the claim is not very substantial as a 'causal theory' (Osmani, 1991:588) even where it is correct. De Waal sketches a more substantial theory which highlights the importance in famines of issues of destitution (asset-loss) and not only issues of hunger; and which responds to the relative weakness of the link from hunger or undernutrition to deaths, by including the roles of violence and of collapsing social organization in generating and spreading fatal epidemics. In his book he stresses that patterns of response are very locally specific, depending on local social economy, ecology, and social values (de Waal, 1989, Ch.9).^{ix}

In effect de Waal argues that Osmani's model (Fig.1, without level 0) oversimplifies, fails to clarify the nature and variety of famines, and so can sustain the use of Bengal-type suppositions. We might thus add a level 0 in the diagram, concerning the concepts used throughout. Here ET provides an important set of concepts for analyzing famines, but not a sufficient set.^x De Waal concludes that 'Famines are sufficiently diverse...that what is required is a heterogenous approach' (1990:605).

Osmani maintains his general claim that every famine involves a failure of food entitlements, by holding that violent removal of access (as by RENAMO) is also removal

of entitlement, in the sense of loss of ability to acquire food using legal means. So 'if such disruptions do cause a famine, they can only do so by causing a failure of food entitlement' (Osmani, 1991:590-1). Consider Figure 3.

Fig.3. THEORETICALLY ATTAINABLE IN TERMS OF THE LAW

		Yes	No
ATTAINABLE IN PRACTICE	Yes	A	B
	No - law not respected	C	D
	No - for other reasons	E	F

All of case A is clearly in the entitlements set. B, D, E and F are clearly not: case B concerns real possibilities of acquisition by criminal means; D concerns criminality foiled by others' criminality; F concerns impossible criminality; E concerns infeasible rights, perhaps say physical security for all. Case C is more difficult, for it concerns legal rights that are feasible but, in practical terms, unenforceable; for example there can be illegal reductions in one's acquirement potential that the legal system will fail to redress (Osmani, 1991:592). Entitlement theory may have begun with the assumption that cases of type C (and B, criminal acquisition) are in general not very important. This is highly questionable (see e.g. Duffield, 1993).

Case C then raises problems of classification:- do entitlements, in Sen's sense, refer to what is theoretically legally attainable, i.e. the sum of A and C, or only to what is both theoretically and practically attainable in terms of the law, i.e. only to A? We can call these respectively the legal and the practical definitions. Osmani accepts that illegal transfers (case B for the bandits) are in practice often not remediable through the legal system (which implies case C for the victims). He proposes that entitlements refer only to A, the practical definition: what one can in practice legally acquire given the way the legal system actually operates.

The practical definition protects ET's claims as a general explanation of famines. Sen himself sometimes used it, but seemed less concerned to distinguish the two definitions.^{xi} Perhaps case C appeared unimportant for Bengal. Later I will suggest that he also had an interest to assess the adequacy of formal legal entitlements, covering both A and C, i.e. our legal definition.

If one accepts Osmani's practical definition of 'entitlement', de Waal suggests that the so-called 'causal theory' of famines is then itself true by definition (1991:598-9).^{xii} This helps us understand Osmani's further claim: 'If ET has flaws, they must be sought in its own logical structure' (p.593).^{xiii} 'ET' is thus a conceptual organizing framework rather than a complex model of famine causation or a comprehensive general theory. We can better speak, with Sen, of 'the entitlement approach' (1981, Ch.5) or *entitlements analysis*, rather than of the 'entitlements theory' which de Waal criticizes; EA rather than ET. Osmani (1993) himself prefers the term 'approach' rather than 'theory'. As Sen said, it refers to a 'general framework' (1981:162), which here means a framework of wide applicability, helpful for the analysis of many cases, but not for all aspects, and likely to be less useful for some cases than others.

Osmani (1993) lucidly elaborates and defends this 'approach-view', as being

appropriate and fruitful, and clearly presented in 'Poverty and Famines'. The entitlements approach to famines starts by looking at entitlements failures, which can arise in various ways, including in the absence of availability declines; whereas the FAD approach starts from a presumed availability decline, even if it then traces the asymmetric impacts on entitlements. Osmani links some of the confusions about the nature of ET/EA, both in pro- and anti-Sen literature, to Sen's usages in pre-'Poverty and Famines' work. (However nearly all those confused cite 'Poverty and Famines'. In later parts of this paper I look at some other confusions, and suggest links to Sen's usages in the 1981 book itself.

Before looking at extensions of entitlements analysis, we need to sum up what this would be an extension of. The key elements are: (i) analysis of effective/legitimate command, and its various channels and determinants, including attention to (ii) the rules and institutions that control access, and to (iii) the distinctive positions and vulnerabilities of different groups. And our conclusions so far are: the approach provides a valuable framework for analysing famines, emphasizing the centrality of power and of enforceable rights, but it is not a complex causal theory; and its appealing central concepts inevitably need further definition as we face a wider range of cases.

2.3. Famine- and hunger-policy analysis: the WIDER project

After Sen's 1970s work on famines, in the 1980s he and associates working through the World Institute of Development Economics Research (WIDER) have extended the entitlements approach, to cover hunger in general, and to identify and assess policy options for ensuring that people have and obtain entitlements. The WIDER work makes no claim that hunger policy analysis requires only the entitlement approach. For example, the lesson of the importance of political and media pressure upon governments is certainly not specific to EA. But EA's merit (in comparison especially to FAD theory) is that:

Seeing hunger as entitlement failure points to [a wider range of] possible remedies as well as helping us to understand the forces that generate hunger and sustain it. In particular this approach compels us to take a broad view of the ways in which access to food can be protected or promoted, including reforms of the legal framework within which economic relations take place (Dreze & Sen, 1989:24).

Entitlements analysis thus has major implications for famine anticipation and famine relief, not just famine prevention. Both relief and prevention are conceived as involving protection of food entitlements, which can be done in many different ways. The elaboration of these insights, summarized in Dreze & Sen's 'Hunger and Public Action' (1989), has received wide and deserved acclaim.

The book does not rely on elaborate use, or further elaboration, of some of the apparatus in 'Poverty and Famines', like the E-mapping and commodity space, which are almost conspicuous by their absence. This is not only because Dreze and Sen aim at a wide audience. For their purposes of identifying and reviewing policy options the apparatus is unnecessary, and could be unhelpful, for example in aggregating as an E-mapping those things one wants to separately focus on. Instead they unpack the E-mapping. EA functions very well for them, as a generative schema, a set of

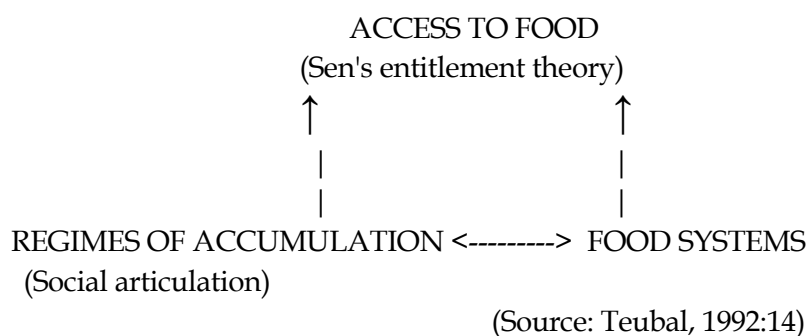
prompting questions which encourages (rather than 'compels') a broad view. They have no need for greater formal pretensions, even if those were initially important in establishing tolerance of EA amongst economists. Where theoretical elaboration is found useful is instead in making connections to Sen's analysis of 'capabilities', for those are the real focus of interest: what people can do and be with their entitlements.

Next, even a concern with hunger leads the analysis well beyond food, for 'the capability to be nourished depends crucially on other characteristics of a person that are influenced by such non-food factors as medical attention, health services, basic education, sanitary arrangements, provision of clean water, eradication of infectious epidemics, and so on' (Dreze & Sen, 1989:177). So there must be a 'broadening of our concern from food entitlements to more general entitlements' (p.178). The second half of the book thus has a much wider focus than hunger; and treats health, education and so on as also of value in their own right, and as general basic needs, not only as aids to physical nourishment. Finally, this broadening seems to bring a further relative decline in use of the earlier terminology, though there are new arrivals too, notably 'essential entitlements' (p.267) and 'basic entitlements' (p.269), which return us to basic needs discourse.

Why this decline of the earlier conceptual apparatus? Analysis focused on famine could work tolerably well by generalizing economics' 'consumer theory' and the idea of purchasing power: proceeding from endowments, with a mapping via production and trade, which generate control of, or an income to use on, goods and services that are in turn directly used. Amongst the many real-world complications (ignorance, time, culture, etc.), public goods and other aspects of welfare (like 'self-respect, or freedom from social harassment'; Sen, 1984:500) may necessitate a different approach.^{xiv} Neither income nor legal rights give a good idea of the degree of effective access to vital public goods: 'If there is no hospital in the neighbourhood or no school within easy reach - or if there are hospitals and schools but with highly limited capacity - the income [or constitutional rights] of the would-be purchaser may not give much of an idea as to whether the person can or cannot acquire these commodities' (Sen, 1984:520; my addition). Similarly, a school that provides classes but not skills may be little use; hence the need for attention to capabilities, not just goods and services.

WIDER's and related work has looked at a variety of sources of entitlement decline/variation, though without aspiring to grand theory. Teubal (1992) does try to relate entitlement theory to grander analyses of causes (see Fig.4). His own work on food (in)security in Argentina is more at the level of 'regimes of accumulation'.

Fig.4.



Proceeding in these directions, we move beyond analysis of food and hunger, and on to distribution in general.

3. NEW EXTENSIONS OF ENTITLEMENTS ANALYSIS

One frequently now finds work that describes itself as entitlements analysis and acknowledges a debt to Sen. It spans many different subjects and treatments. This section has three objectives: to elucidate the nature of the range; to show further that the entitlements approach is indeed a type of approach or problematique, not a single or precise or integrated theory; and to look at the variety of types of relation of such work to Sen's, and at the implications. Some work limits itself to elaborating Sen's formulations; some tries to build from but modify them; other examples consciously distance themselves from his specifics.

3.1. Towards a general analysis of distribution ?

While Sen has taken the entitlements approach beyond hunger and food, he remarked that 'there is clearly little point in trying to develop a general theory of exchange entitlement determination' (1981:174). The range of determinants is huge. The 'E-mapping' is thus a conglomerate of numerous factors, which can include for example arrangements for public provision, such as social security or famine relief supplied as of right. The practical definition of the mapping will then reflect the strength of pressures on government to make this public provision, and to enforce or implement legal rights (see e.g. Sobhan, 1990). Such issues increase the possible gap between legal 'entitlement' and receipt, compared to a 1940s Bengal situation without supplementary rights or provision.^{xv}

The E-mapping notion and the entitlements set can also become unhelpfully broad when we move outside the short term, so wide will the range of possibilities be. Even for the short term the range is easier to define for, say, agricultural labourers (a main focus for Sen), than for speculators, who are another central player in famines and on wider stages. For speculative gains or losses can vary enormously.

Since the E-mapping covers so much, we should not be surprised that Woldemeskel, for one, misreads it. He berates Sen for neglecting institutional elements, incorporating them only as influences on what we possess (1990:492-3). In reality, these factors are part of the E-mapping too. I agree with Woldemeskel that the conceptual apparatus in 'Poverty and Famines' directed considerable attention to possession, people's endowments; but my explanation will differ from his (see section 4 below).

Despite these sorts of difficulty, many authors look to entitlements theory/analysis as one starting point for discussing distribution, given the attractions we saw earlier. We look next at examples framed at a very broad level, whether for purposes of explanation or of policy and planning. In section 3.2. we turn to more specific examples.

De Gaay Fortman (1990) presents 'An Institutional Approach to the Acquirement Problem', starting from Sen but then diverging somewhat. He finds EA a useful frame for studying acquirement processes: 'change produces conflicts in terms of rights and

obligations. Entitlement analysis is a way of getting insight into such disputes' (p.2). But even legal entitlements are often not clearcut; nor are determinate legal rights always enforced or enforceable. Sen too was well aware that laws must be interpreted in practice (1981:49; 1984:457); there is no law without context. And beyond legal rights, effective access within institutions typically depends not only on formal rules but on particular relationships of authority and influence. So 'analysis of institutions as bases of entitlement and commitment should not focus so much on rules [which are never complete, totally clear, or unfailingly applied] but rather on the *sources* of the rules and the sources of effective inducement, coercion and claiming' (1990:8; emphasis added). One must consider rules' actual backing and operation: the whole institution, not only the formally constituted organization. If our 'approach is to concentrate on *sources of entitlement*' (p.5; emphasis added), not on a supposed determinate link from rules to access, the main attention shifts from sets of income options towards principles and systems of entitlement. This is the approach of Dreze & Sen (1989) too.

De Gaay Fortman in effect calls for work subtler and broader than the current 'new institutional economics', which examines assumed maximizing behaviour by individuals under various sets of organizational rules. 'Entitlement analysis may bring development policy back to its core: *institution-building*' (p.29). He stresses for example the 'importance of customary sources of law... as guarantees against growing inequality and marginalization. If traditional institutions really have to go, then they should be replaced by new entitlement processes, also rooted in firmly built institutions' (1990:24-5).^{xvi}

Gore (1993)'s complementary project is explanatory rather than policy-oriented. He relates Sen's approach to other lines of work:- on the negotiation and interpretation of the meanings of legal rights, both in legal judgements and bureaucratic practice, including access theory's work on the administrative allocation of public sector benefits; on conventions and negotiations within the household, or within peasant communities (as seen by the 'moral economy' school); on provision of public facilities; and more. We return later to the criticisms he then makes of Sen's concepts and claims.

Both Gore and de Gaay Fortman move beyond Sen's terms, though Gore relates them to other theories. De Gaay Fortman seeks rather to use the new wave of interest generated by Sen, to invigorate the longstanding programme of socio-institutional economics. His campaign-agenda includes publicity for ideas of international human rights, as a basis for programmes of conscientization and mass pressure. As Watts (1991) says, empowerment is an essential path to entitlement. His research agenda includes 'analyses of the constraints in present entitlement processes' (de Gaay Fortman, 1990:27), and of the potential of various proposed State, NGDO, and community arrangements, planning procedures, and so on, for 'operationalizing economic and social rights in terms of institutions, values and methods of valuation' (p.28). Here we are at the beginning of a long process: to analyse and help build institutions to safeguard interests of the poor and vulnerable, and to generate resources and responsibilities, not only expectations and demands.^{xvii}

Some agencies now talk of operationalizing entitlements analysis, in the sense of devising methods of evaluation as serviceable as economic cost-benefit analysis and yet with a richer moral basis. But Sen's concept of entitlement is sometimes problematic,

and the determinants of entitlements are typically numerous and complex; so the results may be hardly computable, especially once we look at multiple time periods and at situations marked by risk and uncertainty. Analysis is more manageable in the special case of a famine, to see whether the access of very poor groups to food allows them to subsist. Given the computability problems, we cannot produce a precise 'entitlements impact analysis' comparable to cost-benefit analysis. What could be attainable are an enriched social impact analysis or Planning Balance Sheet Analysis. We may face difficulties in distinguishing groups in a satisfactory way and in obtaining worthwhile data, but often rough calculations will be feasible, enlightening, and enough. The key purpose is to promote attention to and representation of the interests and voices of various groups. As in Planning Balance Sheet Analysis, one will not aim to sum the categorized and identified impacts to an overall figure. The exercise will instead be to inform and influence political decision, by highlighting the interests of the vulnerable, and by guiding the eyes of decision-makers, planners, and publics.

3.2. Entitlements analyses of privatization, households, and environment

Many authors who look at specific topics or cases now cite Sen and his framework as their starting point. The same approach as in 'Poverty and Famines' -- beginning from the insight that availability does not imply access -- has to be taken further, by disaggregating for example on lines of gender and age. Sen's clear formulation has stimulated work by others, some of which then surpasses his -- one sign of a fruitful research programme.

Fitzgerald's study of 'Economic Reform and Citizen Entitlements' in Eastern Europe (1991) analyses the major shifts in access to goods since 1989. He stresses the need to replace public goods provision that was previously handled by employers; and argues that, in order to attain the social acceptance needed for economic adjustment, one must recognize popular demands for minima in the overall private-plus-public wage, though this will only be feasible with outside aid. In looking at requirements for social acceptance, he may need more attention to normative bases of 'entitlement'. Sen's positive version of entitlements analysis does not seem to take the analysis anywhere very new, but informs rather than limits it.

Closer to Sen--in a study entitled 'an application of Sen's theory of entitlements'--Aslanbeigui & Summerfield (1989) describe the possible negative impacts on women's incomes of the decline of socialist organization in rural China since the 1970s. They use 'entitlement' as a synonym for real income--a reduced form of the practical definition. Thus they focus not on women's legal titles, nor on their moral claims in terms of local norms, but on their actual receipts, which may not well reflect either legal titles or local norms. Norms of intra-family division, for example, are underdefined, disputed, and violated. So too of course are norms of intra-societal division.

Kabeer more extensively probes intra-household distribution and rural women's entitlements, especially legitimated access to food, using case studies of Bangladesh and the Gambia (Kabeer & Aziz, 1990; Kabeer, 1991a; and see Kabeer, 1991b, for a version without entitlements language.) She tests, refines, and qualifies Sen's work (1984,

1987b) on how women's ('extended') entitlements depend on negotiations within the household. The outcomes reflect (a) women's degree of economic independence, (b) how far they neglect their own well-being for the rest of the household, (c) the culturally relative perceptions of what is a contribution, and (d) how far women are subject to intimidation. For Bangladesh, Kabeer and Aziz contrast 'kin-ascribed entitlements' -- i.e. transfers within the family, which can especially depend on factors (b), (c) and (d) -- with 'own-labour [based] entitlements', which can be more independent of those factors (p.42). They stress too the unequal distribution of obligations, e.g. for household upkeep and child care; we can call these negative entitlements. Thus in the Gambia, women have their own access to land, but the weight of domestic obligations on top of their commitments on their own and others' lands places them under enormous stress, especially if of child-bearing age.

In doing this sort of case work, Kabeer and others find it useful or natural to metamorphose Sen's distinctions between types of entitlement relation (1981:2) into distinctions between types of entitlement. 'Exchange entitlements' now no longer refer to all that an agent can derive from his/her endowments (Sen, 1981:3-4); instead, for the case of entitlements to food it means 'food acquired through sale', as opposed to 'direct entitlements, that is, the acquisition of household food supplies through own production;... and transfer entitlements based on state transfers, gifts, inheritance etc.' (Kabeer & Aziz, 1990:4). The language of entitlements-from joins that of entitlements-to. Yet these new usages are presented as Sen's own (loc. cit.). Similar patterns occur in other recent work (e.g. Cannon, 1991)^{xviii}; including use of 'entitlements' to refer to rights in resources, i.e. to what Sen called endowments. For example, Davies & Leach speak of 'environmental entitlements--or access to natural resources' (1991:2).

A final example shows this evolution (or return) in full flood: a book on environment in Zimbabwe, written by two NGOs (ENDA/ZERO, 1992) for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio.^{xix} ENDA/ZERO survey Zimbabwe's environmental problems, looking at socio-economic causes and not only at physical symptoms. They argue that 'The essential problem is the failure of global and national systems to guarantee basic entitlements to the majority' (p.3), which drives ordinary people to unsustainably exploit their natural environments. Adverse 'ownership entitlements' for peasant households lead to adverse exchange entitlements, which undermine the ownership entitlements further, since peasants feel forced to resort to activities that degrade soil, forest, and water resources. Sen's terms evolve here in many ways, into for example 'exchange entitlements on the supply side' and 'on the demand side', and 'disentitlement' used as both a noun and a verb. Endowments have become 'ownership entitlements', and 'entitlement' sometimes becomes a moral claim.^{xx}

Here again entitlements theory is used not to analyse famine or even hunger, but to describe entire patterns of distribution, power, and environmental impact. In terms of clarity and consistency at least, the attempts seem unsatisfactory. Possibly Dreze & Sen's claim above applies: that EA has encouraged reference to a wider range of determinants than would otherwise receive attention. But the analysis can be presented more accessibly without the terminology -- as was done by two of the same

authors in an earlier book covering similar material (Moyo, et al, 1991). Perhaps the terminology lends authority; but it could lead to confusion as much as to enlightenment.

This sort of evolution has become typical in both popular and academic work. Once attention has focussed on patterns of rights and claims, which are complex and vary over time and place, the terms and formats irresistibly evolve beyond Sen's. In section 4.2. I give some of the reasons, both good and bad, for why and how this happens.

3.3. Famine, hunger, and plenty; concepts, models, and evaluations

We can distinguish by this stage a range of contexts and concerns, and variation in a number of dimensions: (a) location in time and place: for example, Bengal in the 1940s, Argentina, Bengal, China, Gambia, and Sudan in the 1980s, and Eastern Europe and Zimbabwe in the 1990s, as we have seen; (b) substance: analyses of famine situations, through to wider food security, through to overall societal distribution; and (c) mode: positive analyses (whether descriptive, explanatory, or both), or normative analyses (whether evaluative or prescriptive); and associated provision of conceptual frameworks for one or both.^{xxi}

Can such a range be well served by the simple EA apparatus we introduced earlier, which was presented by 'Poverty and Famines' as a conceptual frame for a primarily positive analysis of famines? A universally sufficient, and yet manageable, working version of entitlements theory seems unlikely. We may need various different, situationally adequate, working simplifications. In famine analysis, Sen used his frame to improve on the FAD school, in both explanation and policy, and to criticize the inadequate legal entitlements of vulnerable groups. He succeeded in both purposes, whatever the limits to the frame. For other cases and purposes one's conceptualization may need to be amended: for example, for a more comprehensive explanation of famines. Even for 'famines', de Waal warns that the category is not sufficiently homogeneous: there are too many significant differences between Sen's root case and many other famines. On the other hand, if entitlements analysis proves useful in what is a whole family of types of famine, perhaps it can be useful for other cases too. We will see though how Gore suggests that, as over time Sen's focus has extended beyond famine, so his emphasis in defining rules of entitlement evolved.

All the work noted here in section 3 is interesting and insightful. In some cases, 'entitlements' language helps us toward the insights. In other cases it is innocuous, whether well-used or mis-used. In a third set of cases its misuse could be pernicious, burdening thought under neologism. Section 4 considers whether part of the problem goes back to Sen, for adopting terms that are open to misunderstanding, and for using vague and multiple definitions of 'entitlements'. It also asks if such definitions help explain why so wide a range of concerns all see themselves as forms of entitlements analysis. We will proceed roughly in the sequence of Sen's problematique, from rules and relations of entitlement, through endowments, to exchange entitlements.

4. CRITICISMS OF THE TERM 'ENTITLEMENT' AND OF ITS USAGE

4.1. Loose definition of rules of entitlement ?

In a dense critique, Gore (1993) queries several of Sen's central claims. He proposes that (1) Sen defines the rules of entitlement in various different ways. From his set of quotations, the first three or four can define a spectrum. First: 'legal channels of acquirement' (Sen, 1987a:8); second, 'means... legitimized by the legal system' (Sen, 1981:45), but which need not be specified in law; third and broadest, 'the rules of acquirement that govern [a person's circumstances]' (Sen, 1984:30-31), or 'the set of all rights relevant to him' (Sen, 1982:348). This last definition matches the concept of 'extended entitlement' and includes legal rights, conventions concerning their application, and relevant social rules not formalized in law. Gore then argues that (2) Sen oscillates between these meanings, often emphasizing the first, but over time shifting towards the broadest version.^{xxii}

He further suggests that, while Sen recognizes that the broader definitions are more realistic and provide better tools in explanation, (3) he has had a preference (especially in earlier work) for viewing rules of entitlement as only the rules stated by law, because he has a second agenda, in moral philosophy. He has long criticized consequence-independent interpretations of rights, such as advocated by the influential libertarian American philosopher Robert Nozick (1974), e.g. views which say that property rights are valid regardless of their consequences, even starvation. (We look at this further in 4.2 below.) Sen argues that rights should be seen as criteria of real but finite weight, whose fulfilment is to be balanced together with the consequences. Gore proposes that (4) defining the rules of entitlement narrowly as legal rights suits a criticism of consequence-independent rights, since it allows clear identification of their consequences. He adds that (5) other devices further this critique of Nozick, such as downplaying illegal actions as causes of famines, and the assumptions that people's rightful claims are always respected and that they always make the best use of their opportunities; thus famines are seen as always legal and people are left no choice but to starve.^{xxiii}

With a broad view of rules of entitlement which encompasses moral rules in society as well as legal rights, then (6) Sen's claim--that consequence-independent views of rights can justify inaction in the face of starvation--becomes more difficult to sustain, because identification of consequences becomes less clear. Not only are there now more determinants, but some rules interact or conflict with each other and are subject to dispute and negotiation. Gore goes much further, (7): 'Sen's critique of Nozick's theory of justice, on the grounds that [it] can lead to "catastrophic moral horrors", becomes impossible to sustain... [8] the key conclusions that "The law stands between food availability and food entitlement" and "Starvation deaths can reflect legality with a vengeance" are seen to be contingent on a particular, arbitrarily narrow, definition of rules of entitlement as state-enforced legal rights' (Gore, 1993:454).^{xxiv}

Gore has probed several grey areas and considerably enriched the discussion of entitlement relations. Sen indeed seems to have moved between legal and other definitions (points 1 and 2).^{xxv} He has certainly also had an interest in what

entitlements are implied by legal channels alone (point 3). Note though that in the Bengal case these were--by the stage of full-blown famine--close to the total entitlement: the most vulnerable groups lacked important other claims that were matched by a binding obligation on the part of someone else (cf. Greenhough, 1980, 1983). In addition, when Sen refers to acquisition through legal channels this can sometimes be read as 'channels permitted by law', not 'channels specified by law'; hence it partly covers the broad sense that Gore highlights. It covers use of rights and conventions that are not specified in law but are not counter to law; similarly, rights enforceable in a court are more than just those specified in law. But Gore's point (6) is that social rules often do run counter to law, and that rules of entitlement are subjects of negotiation and struggle; so the 'extended entitlements' view is too mechanical an extension.

Several objections still confront Gore's propositions (4), and especially (7) and (8). Did Sen read rules of entitlement as only legal rights because only that version allows derivation of precise consequences with which to then assess the adequacy of a person's rights? Even legal entitlements are not in general sharply determinate, and predicting their consequences can also not be precise (see e.g. de Gaay Fortman, 1990). Sen was aware of these problems (1981:49) and explicitly held that the orders of magnitude were not such as to invalidate his approach, for the purposes and cases concerned. He held that he could indeed still ascertain whether the legal entitlements of specific vulnerable groups were enough to cover subsistence in his cases of famine, even though for other cases the adequacy of entitlements might be indeterminate. This argument largely applies even when we add the further complications in Gore's point (6). If the difficulty of prediction is so great, then the *explanatory* project which Gore also outlines could be in greater trouble, for it involves a wider range of determinants, and may need a higher level of precision than simply establishing whether one's legal rights suffice for subsistence.

In addition, if the inadequacy of legal entitlements is or could be counteracted in certain cases by the operation of moral rules that are outside the law, this does not mean that the legal entitlements are adequate, only that they have been outflanked. Assessing the legal entitlements is not the same as assessing the society, except where there are no other sources of entitlement (as may have been true in the famine stage of the Bengal case). A narrow version of 'rules of entitlement' is appropriate for Sen when criticizing Nozick and extreme interpretations of legal property rights--necessarily so, since Nozick uses that narrow version, and that is what Sen wishes to assess, in the context of famine situations. But when it comes to explanation then we indeed need a broader conception of rules of entitlement, especially for cases different from 1940s Bengal.

4.2. Why 'entitlements'? Why not?

The term 'entitlement' might not have been well chosen. It is liable to be confused with a moral right, though it was warned that this would be a mistake. The focus was more on legality... (Sen, 1984:30).

Sen gave the food issue a normative content through formulation of the concept of entitlement. (Holmboe-Ottesen & Wandel, 1990:60).

Further difficulties with Sen's concept of 'entitlement' arise because the term was already widely used with different intents from his. First, a term with strong normative connotations has been chosen (though not coincidentally) for a positive construct. Secondly, it is applied not to people's endowments but to the potential consequences of the endowments; specifically to the most favourable amongst those potential outcomes. Thirdly, 'exchange entitlement' has misleading associations, and has taken on a different meaning in the hands of many users.

(i) *Positive and normative meanings*

In everyday language, 'entitlement' has both descriptive and moral uses, often at the same time. Descriptive uses involve saying who holds what titles ('X has title to Y'), or what applies in terms of the rules that currently hold for a given case, e.g.: 'person X is not entitled to Y'. Moral use implies approbation or condemnation -- often passionate -- of particular rules and their applications to claims, e.g.: 'X is entitled to Y' meaning 'X should have title to Y'. Simon Schama's 'Citizens' (1989) vividly records mass outrage at lost or threatened traditional entitlements in the years leading to the 1789 French Revolution. Moral usage is widespread in ordinary speech; for example a descriptive use is often also a moral use, if the speaker endorses the rules which she describes as being in force (authoritatively sanctioned) for the case. This indicates the virtual inevitability of 'secondarily evaluative' language, where a term is used with dual reference, at once positive and normative. Sen's own usage is open to dual reading by others when he discusses 'entitlements to'; e.g.: 'his entitlement to the food he has grown' (1981:156; also p.159); or 'the entitlement to - and the actual use of - educational opportunities' (Dreze & Sen, 1989:262; emphasis added).

Compounding the problem, not long before Sen first published on entitlements analysis in 1976, Nozick employed a moral usage of 'entitlement' in his widely debated 'Anarchy, State and Utopia' (1974). This was no coincidence: Sen's work reacts against Nozick's (cf. Sen, 1984:311-3). And Nozick's usage was no idiosyncrasy; it reflected one established usage in moral philosophy, stemming at least from the work of John Locke (1632-1704). Nozick advocated a set of principles of moral entitlement which give absolute sanctity to individuals' acquisitions--whether due to chance, inherited talent, bequest, acquired skill, or effort--as long as the acquisitions do not infringe a few principles, notably those of agreed contracts and voluntary transfers. Not even the subsistence needs of others establish a case, according to Nozick, for transfer of part of a person's acquisitions against their wishes.

Sen's work on famines analysed the extent and consequences of the legal entitlements of poor and vulnerable groups, to allow us to draw our own conclusions on a set of normative principles which could legitimate the starvation unto death of millions, whilst food controlled by others sits by.^{xxvi} This partly explains his retention of the term 'entitlement'. But a dual motivation--trying to be a vehicle for positive analysis, and at the same time give an indirect moral critique of possessive individualism--carries some price in terms of audience confusion, via the currency of an ambiguous central term. Sen underlined from the outset (1981:2) that his usage is descriptive, unlike Nozick's; but the normative associations of 'entitlement' almost

inevitably influence the use of the term in practice.

The much quoted final sentences of 'Poverty and Famines' main text support this interpretation. 'The law stands between food availability and food entitlement. Starvation deaths can reflect legality with a vengeance' (Sen, 1981:166). The second sentence queries viewing property rights as implying absolute and exclusive control, and is justified by Sen's case studies; but the first sentence suggests pitfalls set by the terms chosen. The law implies, and in the process constrains, the scope of a person's food entitlement (in the positive sense). Can we say then that the law stands outside the (positive) entitlement and 'between' it and something else (such as another person's positive entitlement to more food than he needs) - even if we refer to the law as also protecting others' property? What the law clearly can stand outside, in the sense of not endorse, is a person's normative entitlement, to subsistence; and it can separate the person from available food needed to fulfil that, normative, entitlement.

(ii) *Entitlements as present rights to resources, or as the rightfully held resources, or as a set of possible titles arising from use of the rights and resources ?*

A second query concerning Sen's usage of 'entitlements' is that he attaches the term not to 'endowments' but to his 'exchange entitlements'. But in Nozickian and common usage one can be entitled to what one has, and to what one legally gets, rather than to what one might conceivably get. (See e.g. Bromley, 1991.^{xxvii}) We saw that some authors then adapt Sen's use of 'entitlements', to include endowments. They speak of ownership entitlements or endowment entitlements (e.g. Cannon, 1991), such as 'environmental entitlements': 'rights attributed to groups or individuals confirming their control and management of given resources' (Davies & Leach, 1991:2).^{xxviii} 'Entitlement' now refers (again) to anything a person has title to, by legal or accepted rights (see e.g. Curtis et al, 1988), or to the rights themselves.

Nozick focused on endowments; he was less interested in estimating their consequences. Granted, what one does with and obtains from one's endowments can then change the endowments; but EA/ET is not very useful to explain endowments. For 'exchange entitlements' are a set of optional outcomes which one, feasibly and legally, merely might acquire; and part of what one obtains is ephemeral and perishable.

So exchange entitlements alone will not explain endowment change. However, if one wishes to assess endowments by estimating their consequences under various conditions, one must of course identify those possible consequences, namely the 'exchange entitlement'.

Next, the main usage of Sen's 'entitlement' notion refers -- restated in everyday language -- to the most that people might become entitled to. It is a set of opportunities, and differs from what people actually obtain:- (a) people may fail to make good use of their opportunities, or to (b) claim their rights; (c) they may also lose or acquire in illegal or otherwise socially illegitimate ways; and (d) they may give away their own goods, or receive discretionary support from others, e.g. through the kindness of neighbours. No problem attaches here to exclusion of illegality and charity (c & d) from the definition of 'entitlements' (Sen, 1981: 3,49,164.) Failure to claim one's entitlements (e.g. social security) raises some problems, if associated with questions over whether rights are known or respected. But bigger problems arise for reason (a)

--failure to make good use of opportunities-- since it is so widespread. The size of the resulting gap between (exchange) 'entitlements', in Sen's sense, and actual receipts is thus a further divergence from ordinary usage.^{xxix}

We do need a set of terms, to describe an ongoing process of acquiring and using. Sen's 'exchange entitlement' refers to the possible titles into which one could *change* one's present titles ('endowments'), via production, trade, etc. But the gap between this usage inspired by micro-economics, and the everyday and legal usages, brings problems. 'Potential entitlements' would do better as a label for 'exchange entitlements'.

(iii) *Problems generated by the 'exchange'-entitlement label*

Even though the E-mapping covers production, and even transfers, as well as trade, Sen used 'exchange entitlements' for what one can legally obtain from one's endowments via the E-mapping. Responding to a Nozickian view in which people own bundles, to which they are deemed entitled, he needed to distinguish what he was interested in (namely, what one can obtain) from that sort of entitlement (endowments, seen as ownership entitlements). Probably intentionally, his term also suggested an exchange economy.

Some writers openly or tacitly redefine 'exchange entitlement' to cover only trade. Since Sen had elsewhere talked of direct entitlement failures and trade entitlement failures, many writers have grown to speak of direct entitlements, i.e. from own production, and of trade- or exchange- entitlements as what can be obtained via trade (e.g. Woldemeskel, 1990; Cannon, 1991; Field, 1991). They shift from talking about entitlements to something, to entitlements from production/trade/ &c.^{xxx} The next step is 'transfer entitlements' (e.g. Valentine, 1993), to complete the trio of production, trade, and transfer, all of which Sen originally covered by the 'exchange entitlements' label.^{xxxi} Here again his terminology appears unstable and subject to transformation.

Better terms than 'entitlement' for what Sen refers to might be 'legitimate access', 'legitimate acquisition potential', or 'legitimate effective command'. The last of these is the other face of 'effective demand'. Indeed at many points Sen explains entitlement as command over commodities (e.g. 1981:154; 1987a:7; Dreze & Sen, 1989: 9, 65). A new Open University textbook that will spread the concept more widely says: 'Entitlement is the command that people can exert over goods', (Wuyts, 1992:22), implicitly legally.

Why not take the referent - legitimate command - as the label? Firstly because Sen's 'exchange entitlements' are only potential effective command, which may or may not be achieved, depending upon a person's actions, and upon other people's adherence to laws and regulations. And secondly, perhaps because the referent is legitimate command, not just command, Sen wished to retain the 'legal associations of the term "entitlement" [which] also happen to have some directional and suggestive value' (1987a:13). As we have seen, however, the term has other associations too, of dubious value for his project.

So, for both words in the 'exchange entitlement' label, Sen's choice is understandable, yet rather misleading. Overall, the combination of an elusive referent and a label with multiple associations brings some unfortunate effects.^{xxxii}

4.3. Claiming terms

Clearly we face several sets of problems for terminology in this field. First are similar problems to those faced by most wide-ranging concepts in social science, as they seek to span varied and complex experience. Sen's conceptualization worked well enough for his purposes in Bengal and similar cases, and can be seen there as suitable simplification; it faces problems if we wish to build a general theory.^{xxxiii} Second, mass social science, not least policy work in aid organizations, has a large appetite for generalized simplifications (especially under prestigious and evocative labels), perhaps more than for exploratory approaches, and tends to cruden whatever helpful approaches arrive. Third, in this case Sen's wide-ranging concepts are very prone to such evolution and possible confusion, given the labels he adopted. Even if we could improve the labels we would still face the first and second sets of problems; but re-labelling might yet be worthwhile.

A central sense of 'entitlement' is 'what one has title to'. We have seen there are very many types of possible or proposed title -- moral, legal, de facto. Some are as follows:- (a) a claim of moral entitlement, lacking predominant social acceptance; perhaps one would label this as a claimed right; Nozick's entitlement theory of distributive justice is one set of such claims; (b) a claim of moral entitlement, with predominant social acceptance; one could call this an acknowledged right; (c) a legally stated entitlement; (d) potential command over resources, consistent with the law; this is one reading of Sen's definition of exchange entitlement, and might be re-labelled 'legitimate potential command', but the referent is hard to specify; (e) de facto command / effective command consistent with the law, reflecting how far the law is actually known, enforced and enforceable; i.e. what a person can in practice obtain title to. This last is the main interpretation in the development literature on food security and income distribution; it might better be labelled 'legitimate effective command'.

Rein and Peattie (1983), writing on social policy in America and Europe, highlight a fourth set of problems, implicit above. We are in effect discussing claims on consumption, arguments over title. For industrial societies Rein and Peattie identify various 'claims structures' (what others call 'systems of entitlement'): within families, from employment, from government, and from capital. As Gore observed, such claims are partly in dispute, and evolve over time; and so, correspondingly, does language. Since norms are argued over, and even agreed norms do not implement themselves, Rein & Peattie reject the term 'entitlement' as too passive:

There is an element of right, entitlement, or 'just deserts'; however these are not always automatically forthcoming, and there is also an active process by which individuals within institutions demand, extract, request, or enforce their bids for resources... [When these are] granted as a right, this must be understood as the outcome of an earlier process of claim-pressing... Because there is no sharp line of demarcation in this ongoing process, the terminology is often confusing. (Rein & Peattie, 1983:26)

5. CONCLUSION

The entitlement approach has exercised such attraction because it is a way to look at distribution of benefits (and, implicitly, costs) within a society, and so raises or can be connected to very many issues. We have noted attempts to apply it for widely different places, topics, and purposes. The original version cannot function equally well for all of them. We saw how de Waal and others hold that as a model for explaining famines it does not function as well for Sudan or Ethiopia as it may have done for Bengal; and how Gore argues that Sen's interest in normative analysis encouraged a narrow definition of entitlements, whereas his explanatory concerns, especially in work after 'Poverty and Famines', led him to a broader definition. The paper has tried to illustrate and explain this pattern more widely: to relate concepts to contexts. We can now consolidate the main arguments.

1. 'Poverty and Famines' (P&F) made a major contribution by effective critiques of the Food Availability Decline approach to famine-relief and -avoidance, and of views of endowment rights as absolute, regardless of their consequences. The categories and foci of 'the entitlement approach' reflected in some ways Sen's experience and assessment of the 1940s Bengal famine. (Sections 2.1, 2.2, 4.1.)

2. Sen, Dreze, and others in the WIDER programme have fruitfully applied and deepened entitlements analysis of a certain type (section 2.3. above). This is not entitlements theory, ET, as a comprehensive causal model (i.e. equally good for all cases, or giving a detailed explanatory schema); for de Waal and others have effectively queried the scope, force and sufficiency of the P&F model of famines and their dynamics. Nor is it entitlements theory as a sharply defined, interlinking family of concepts; for we have seen that the concepts may sometimes be fuzzy (like 'entitlement') or overloaded (like 'E-mapping'). Dreze and Sen make surprisingly little use of ET terminology; it is not vital for trying to identify policy options. They do not claim to draw exact lines from endowments and conditions through to access, but instead emphasize sources of entitlement and how to influence them. The WIDER work thus emphasizes substantive more than conceptual elaboration, and unpacks much of the 'E-mapping' into more concrete matters, open to policy influence (e.g. information, markets, and pressures on governments).

3. This type of entitlements analysis can be seen rather as a problematique and approach, a procedure of questioning and investigation, that encourages wide attention; or as some authors say a 'frame'; not a 'theory' in the sense of a comprehensive causal model or a precise conceptual apparatus. The approach involves, we suggested earlier: i) analysis of effective/sanctioned command, and its various channels and determinants, including attention to ii) the rules and institutions that control access, and iii) the distinctive positions and vulnerabilities of different groups. We can better refer to EA than ET, entitlements analysis rather than entitlements theory. (Sections 2.2, 2.3.)

4. 'Poverty & Famines's combination of conceptual and empirical penetration has stimulated much other work. This has not always combined similar conceptual and empirical force. Further, the vagueness and multiple associations of the term 'entitlement' help to draw in a great variety of interests (Section 3, especially 3.3).

5. Experience with the 'entitlements' concept, as defined by Sen, raises a number

of distinctions and problem-areas, including these: (i) narrow definitions (legal rights only) versus extended definitions (including other social rights and obligations; 2.1, 4.1); (ii) the distinction between legal definitions (i.e. consistent with the law) and practical definitions (reflecting how far the law is enforced; section 2.2); (iii) positive definitions, such as Sen's, versus normative definitions, as in much everyday usage and political philosophy (4.2).

6. Amongst further reasons for evolution from Sen's terms, we noted other differences between his usages of 'entitlement' and its everyday associations: (iv) everyday usage often focuses on present holdings, rather than on what might be obtained from those holdings (4.2), i.e. on actual titles rather than potential ones; and (v) 'exchange' brings connotations of 'trade', leading to various attempts to subdivide Sen's 'exchange entitlements' (4.2).

7. Sen's terms have therefore rapidly come to be used in ways different from his own. 'Entitlement' has become a synonym for purchasing power, or rights, or trade-derived income, and so on. Part of this evolution of terms is inevitable, given the differences between Sen's and everyday usages. Certain authors are well aware of their differences from Sen here, and some cite other older sources as justification. But in many cases the authors appear to think they are using Sen's concepts. (Sections 3.1, 3.2, 4.2.)

8. Has then Sen's specific terminology contributed little, apart from some confusion? Not necessarily. Possibly its rich ambiguity (similar to say the term 'value' in economic theory) has served to mobilize and marry positive and normative concerns, and hence to generate much interesting new work. New work is sure to generate new meanings. Further, Sen's original insights have largely not been lost but instead widely diffused. While the new work is now securely launched, novel and mis- usages grow apace and may later hinder communication. This seems a good time for clarifications: confirming certain distinctions, pruning unnecessary or mistaken growths, underlining differences in purpose and context (3.3), and perhaps re-labelling a few concepts (4.3). The last of these is easy on paper but hard to bring into effect. Yet simply increasing the awareness of some key distinctions should still be helpful.

9. Any problems with Sen's entitlements theory as a conceptual structure do not jeopardize his other work. The concept of entitlement is not crucial for his critiques of utilitarianism, extreme libertarianism, and the untrammelled market.^{xxxiv}

10. Sen's entitlements work has stimulated one new wave of interest in institutional economics and economic anthropology. Some of it tries to use his apparatus, often changing it in doing so. Another part links to broader institutional analysis, which adapts its detailed approach according to the problem considered, rather than taking one specification as universal. Here the more general entitlements approach such as applied in the WIDER project usefully systematizes important themes: the socially disaggregated analysis of concrete aspects of poverty and of the wide range of influencing factors, notably those that can be affected by public action. The emphasis is on substance, evidence, and policy relevance, more than on maintaining the original terms beyond their area of usefulness. Prominent and continuing to innovate in such work is Sen himself. While some of this ongoing work is critical of 'Poverty and Famines', and some is highly approving, all has benefited and been stimulated by his

example of profound, creative examination of vital real-world concerns.

NOTES

This is a shortened and edited version of Working Paper 146, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. Earlier versions were presented at the Development Studies Association conference, University of Nottingham, September 16-18, 1992, and at an ISS seminar, November 5, 1992. I received helpful reactions from participants in those sessions, especially from Jocelyn Kynch, Bas de Gaay Fortman, and Paul van der Wel, and in addition from S.R. Osmani and Raymond Apthorpe. The usual disclaimers apply.

i. In a recent reiteration: "Famines are caused by the inability of some sections of the population to command adequate food for survival. The vulnerable groups face starvation as a result of declines in their 'entitlements' (i.e., the set of commodity bundles over which a family can establish operative control)" (Sen, 1991:4). Sen accepts that entitlements are influenced in various ways by availability (see e.g. 1987:9); but his argument on the insufficiency of the FAD model remains robust. Basu (1986) implies that the government-induced absolute scarcity in parts of rural Bengal meant better-off people were also liable to starvation; and others point out that famine-induced epidemics hardly respect income and degree. Yet Sen established that the recorded mortality amongst vulnerable social categories in Bengal, e.g. agricultural labourers, was far higher than for other groups.

ii. Gore (1993) cites Greenhough (1980, 1983) on the extent of local obligations. Patrons' obligations to support clients in difficulty were significant in more normal times, and even early in the famine, but dissolved during it. Families may have had the right—in terms of local norms—not to share any surpluses, in a time of acute scarcity, inflation, and uncertainty. Gore notes that behaviour thus remained guided by local norms; but such a case shows their limits. Similarly families' coping strategies are much more effective in the early stages than later (cf. Gray & Kevane, 1993).

iii. Sen calls his second category 'exchange entitlement' (1981:3), even though the E-mapping explicitly covers production as well as trade (1981: 3, 172) for he talks of production as 'exchange with nature' (e.g. 1981:172). Later however, 'exchange entitlement' is generally simply called 'entitlement', or 'overall entitlement' (1984:516). So we simply refer to 'E-mapping', rather than 'exchange entitlement mapping'.

iv. In some cases people have legal rights to goods or incomes which cannot feasibly be provided, i.e. cannot be 'entitlements' in Sen's sense; e.g. a right to universal secondary education, or to physical security, which cannot be realized in the country concerned. We might include such rights in the endowment bundle, but they would then be undermined by economic and other constraints in the E-mapping. Curtis et al (1988) remind us that effective entitlements have to be backed by obligations on the part of someone else; but further, such obligations must be both feasible and enforceable.

v. Osmani (1993) shows how this is therefore easily accommodated in a multi-period entitlements analysis. Note that the reality involves more than just balancing present costs and risks versus the future benefits of holding assets, according to one's 'attitudes to risk' and 'discount rate'. For what is the 'one' or 'they' that seeks benefits or preservation? - merely a flexible omnivore for 'benefits' in general ('utility'), or a human being committed or tied to a specific identity, so that 'one' will to a certain extent risk death rather than risk losing one's identity? Such risk-taking is more likely still if the death would be of a weaker member of one's household, not one's own.

vi. See e.g. Jackson & Collier (1991), on the levels and distribution of rural incomes in even a bumper harvest year.

vii. Swift (1989) makes similar criticisms, but goes further in arguing that Sen's categories mirror Indian experience. He seems to underweight the general scope of Sen's framework, and reduces entitlement theory to a model of how declining terms of trade for vulnerable groups can generate famine. A recent redefinition of 'entitlements'—as purely concerning access through trade—reflects this view (IDS, 1992; Swift, 1992), despite WIDER's work (Dreze & Sen, 1989, and section 2.3 here).

viii. Swift (1989) prefers to talk of three 'proximate causes': failures in the spheres of production, exchange relationships, and household access to assets (including legitimate claims on others). He distinguishes three types of asset: investments, stores, and 'claims' (implicitly, claims having some legitimacy and effectiveness).

ix. Jaspars & Young (1992) similarly offer a more complex, empirically based model diverging from that suggested by 'Poverty and Famines'.

X. Immink & Ahmadi-Esfahani (1993)'s quantitative analysis of the 1984-5 Sudan famine finds ET still a far better explanation than FAD; and Gray & Kevane (1993)'s village study from Sudan endorses entitlements analysis against approaches stressing the strength of local coping strategies.

Xⁱ. Osmani (personal communication) has kindly provided an example approximating the practical definition: a wage labourer's 'entitlement is characterized not in terms of what he expects, but in terms of whether or not he can actually find employment' (Sen, 1981:173). Some people will dispute the practical definition, for it ignores the legal right of those preyed upon to regain their property, and thus loses the traditional normative connotation of 'entitlement'; see section 4.2(i).

Xⁱⁱ. Perhaps even an epidemic can be seen as reducing people's capacity to command food, in the sense of their body's ability to make use of nutrients.

Xⁱⁱⁱ. Osmani is also concerned to counter supposed 'blaming' of ET 'as such' for what it fails to achieve, and im-'proper' criticism, viz. of failure to answer questions that ET may not have tried to answer and was 'not meant' for. On this type of defence, see Apthorpe & Gasper (1982).

X^{iv}. Jodha (1989)'s record of villagers' perceptions suggests the centrality of public goods and non-income sources of well-being. He found a very large proportion of the inhabitants of a Rajasthan village clearly worse off by official income criteria compared to two decades earlier, yet declaring themselves better off overall, because of improvements in social independence, variety in diet, ability to send children to school (even if it reduced family income), and so on.

XV. Apthorpe comments: 'in [Asia's] prevailing social circumstances ... legal entitlement to a benefit is a rather theoretical gain... [It] does not mean that such a benefit will be [known or] claimed, let alone obtained, where it is due' (UNESCAP, 1990:41; my addition). We have now noted three possible meanings for 'entitlement': (i) legal guarantees of receipt; (ii) potential command consistent with the law (our 'legal definition'); (iii) de facto command consistent with the law (our 'practical definition'. i) differs from ii) because some legal rights may not be feasible, due to lack of resources, etc.; and iii) is less than ii) because rights may not be known or respected. Both differences are particularly relevant for public goods. Further meanings are reviewed in section 4.3.

XVⁱ. In a related paper, de Gaay Fortman & Mihyo (1991) analyse loss of entitlements through the displacement of customary law and by other actions of the colonial and post-colonial developmentalist State.

XVⁱⁱ. The ANC in South Africa wishes to avoid creating 'a culture of entitlement', according to its head of economic planning, cited in The Economist's 'A Survey of South Africa' (March 20, 1993:20). Vandergeest (1991) describes how mid 20th century Thai governments promulgated the idiom of 'gift' for government development expenditures, and corresponding norms of obligation (negative entitlements) for villagers. These definitions were increasingly disputed, as villagers came to claim development as a citizen's right. Some interesting examples of research on entitling institutions are: Reynolds (1981, 1988) on community land companies and employment guarantee schemes; Curtis et al (1988); Hirway & Terhal (1993); and Valentine (1993).

XVⁱⁱⁱ. Cannon uses a set of entitlement-to's and of entitlement-from's; e.g. 'consumption entitlement' is one of the former (1991:303). 'Reserve entitlements', meaning resources accessible in emergencies, could be either (1991:304).

X^{ix}. The NGOs are ENDA (Environment and Development Activities) and ZERO (Zimbabwe Environmental Research Organization). Support for the work came from IIED in London, CIDA, and others. By coincidence, one of the lead authors is called Charles Gore, like the author of Gore (1993).

XX. Some examples from ENDA/ZERO (1992), with tentative equivalences:- (1) 'Entitlements' in the sense of 'rights', 'resources', or 'income streams', as in 'the unequal appropriation of natural resources entitlements' (p.85), and 'disenfranchisement of land and labour entitlements from rural households' (p.103). (2) 'Entitlements' as rules or principles of entitlement, such as 'social conventions... including... communal entitlements' (p.87). (3) 'Land entitlements' (p.88), meaning specific rights in and over land. (4a) 'Exchange entitlements on the supply side' (p.87), meaning the set of physical outputs obtained from endowments; (4b) 'Exchange entitlements on the demand side' (p.87), meaning 'entitlements' in Sen's sense, the set of attainable 'consumption bundles', i.e. how the outputs and consequent income in (4a) can be disposed of. (5) 'Entitlement' in a legal or moral sense, as in 'the inability of labour to realise its entitlement' (p.98). (6) 'Exchange entitlement failures' instead of Sen's 'trade entitlement failures'; and a new category, 'policy failure', though this operates through the other types of entitlement failure (p.88). (7) 'Direct entitlement failures with respect to labour', due to inadequate education, training, opportunities and experience (p.96), so that people's labour power is of poor quality; and (7b) 'labour exchange entitlement failures' due to poor wages or poor returns to labour for reasons other than poor quality.

XXi . We could tabulate the emphases of different authors, with substantive foci along one dimension (famines; hunger; general distribution), and modes of study along the other (positive; conceptual framing of positive analysis; conceptual framing of normative analysis; evaluation; prescriptive policy analysis). Advocacy of cash-for-work programmes as an effective form of famine relief is an example of prescriptive analysis. Evaluating Nozick's proposed absolute property rights (section 4 below) is part of building a conceptual frame for applied normative work.

XXii . Gore holds that 'Poverty and Famines' lacks the 'extended entitlement' notion. Pp.154-5 may extend that far: 'A person's [entitlement]... depends on what... is given to him free, and what is taken away from him'; while certainly Sen (1982) does so, by specifying 'all rights' affecting a person.

XXiii . We saw how Osmani's practical definition (Fig.2: A) acknowledges some illegality, but is oriented to explanation; whereas Sen's concern also for moral philosophy implies inclusion of C too, legitimate options which are not feasible because of illegality by other people, and faces difficulties if C is very large.

XXiv . Swift too suggests that in societies where one's property or income are subject to many legitimate claims from others--kin, friends, acquaintances, and fellow group-members in need--and are also potentially supplementable by right from many sources, then the 'entitlements' implications of a person's endowments become very hard to define. He argues that Sen's entitlement concept is only workable given 'the classical liberal economy view' of private property which excludes nearly all claims by others (Swift, 1989:12). However Sen's work can also be applied at a more aggregate level, assessing adequacy for a whole group, within which transfers cannot counter inadequate overall command.

XXV . Sen does wish though to separate the legally permitted from the illegal. Osmani proposes that Sen insists on legality in order 'to ensure the definability of the "entitlement set"' (1991:592). This is not the real reason, for Senist entitlements are already hard to define; though certainly crime makes definition of one's acquirement potential harder still. The real reason is that Sen wishes to assess the adequacy of what is legally permitted. (Osmani himself argues that illegality by others which has affected one's endowment should be taken into account in assessing entitlements; but this does not reduce definability.)

XXVi . See e.g. Paul (ed., 1982) and Gasper (1986) for more direct critiques of Nozick's theory of distributive justice.

XXvii . A dictionary definition of 'to entitle' is 'to give (a person) the right to do or have something'. Bromley takes this common meaning of entitlements, as rights to particular resources or goods, and specifies five types of entitlement, corresponding to different property rules. Contrary to libertarian claims, these rights are never complete and absolute; different degrees of scope are possible, according to the type of property rule. So while not Senist, neither is he Nozickian.

XXviii . These rights are focused on by 'Using the theory of entitlements within the natural resource management context' (Toulmin, 1991:22). Entitlements theory seems to add nothing further in the study, but legitimizes a concern for effective rights (i.e. rights that are enforceable and will be enforced) and a substantive legal-institutional economics. Toulmin (p.22) and Davies & Leach (p.3) speak of 'food security entitlements', not food entitlements, continuing the move back to an everyday usage of 'entitlements' as rights, not a set of options.

XXix . We can at least distinguish: 1) potentials at the moment of allocating one's endowments, 2) potentials when later allocating one's resulting income, and 3) the actual resulting titles. Outside 'economic man' models one often does not know or fulfil the greatest potentials in either allocation stage; e.g. if in stage 2) one buys goods and services at a greater price or of lesser quality than necessary. Curtis et al's simplification of 'exchange entitlement' back to purchasing power (1988:5), refers to 2), rather than Sen's 1) or the everyday meaning 3), quite apart from neglecting acquisition by means other than purchasing.

xxx. Swift goes on to annex the entire term -- 'entitlements [are] redefined more narrowly as exchange relationships' (1992:2) -- taking it yet further from its origin. See note 7 for his reasons.

xxxi. Valentine's 'transfer entitlements' can refer to income transfers, opportunities, or rights; and he employs a range of labels: 'public transfer entitlements' (pp.114, 122); 'public entitlements' and 'public entitlement support' (pp.116, 117); 'entitlement guarantees' and 'transfer entitlement guarantees' (pp.121, 122).

XXXXi . Comparing Sen's original terms with the terms that one nowadays encounters, the latter mostly fall into three sets: as synonyms/variants /elaborations for 'entitlement relations' or for 'endowments', or attempted sub-divisions of '(exchange) entitlements'. The 'E-mapping' is too much a conglomerate to invite synonyms. Thus, (i) corresponding to 'entitlement relations': 'sources of entitlement'; 'systems of entitlement'; 'entitlements' (ets.) seen as rules, or as relations that grant rights; (ii) corresponding to 'endowments': 'ownership ets.'; 'endowment ets.'; 'environmental ets.'; 'land ets.';

`natural resource ets.'; (iii) corresponding to `(exchange) ets.', including: A) entitlements-from, like `trade ets.'/ `exchange ets.' (here meaning via trade), `production ets.'/ `direct ets.' (i.e. from own production), and `transfer ets.' (including `public ets.');

B) entitlements-to, such as `food ets.', `exchange food ets.', `wage ets. to food', `nutritional ets.', `consumption ets.', `food security ets.'; and C) prioritizations like `basic ets.' or `essential ets.'.

XXXXIII. Desai indicates further complications in the definition of entitlements, comparable to those in defining income: are entitlements the maximum that one can obtain immediately, or the maximum one can obtain without impairing one's endowments?; and under what assumptions about how other people are behaving? (1988:4).

XXXXV. As the reader can check via his tables of contents and indexes.

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